



## (S) Al-Qa'ida: An Emerging Narco-Supported Terrorist Group?

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(S) As the United States conducts operations along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area to capture or kill senior al-Qa'ida leaders, including Usama bin Laden (UBL) and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and to disrupt Muslim extremists' operations in the region, two key intelligence questions have yet to be adequately answered -- is al-Qa'ida actively involved in the extensive multi-billion dollar drug trade in and around Afghanistan and how much benefit does al-Qa'ida derive from this trade?

(S) These questions need to be better understood and answered if the United States Government is to be effective in disrupting the activities of Muslim extremists and creating a stable Afghanistan government. As al-Qa'ida is a nebulous organization that apparently has morphed into a more "flat" vice hierarchical organization, efforts to understand the organization's level of participation in narcotics trafficking and identify the personnel involved are highly problematic. Despite this ambiguity:

- there appears to be an intentional nexus of convenience between narcotics producers/traffickers and low-level al-Qa'ida operatives;
- there is no intelligence indicating mid- or high-level al-Qa'ida personnel are involved in the drug trade; and,
- key drivers and motivators for further al-Qa'ida involvement in the drug trade include restricting the traditional terrorism sources of revenue as well the elimination of its leadership.

(U//FOUO) Interested in learning more? A recent SINIO Council Perspective examined this issue in detail, and you can view the complete text at:

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